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THE THREE PHASES OF COLORED SUFFRAGE.

BY WALTER C. HAMM.

TWO events of recent occurrence are accepted as marking the beginning of a new phase of the colored suffrage question in this country. One is the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States affirming the validity of the suffrage clause of the Mississippi Constitution. In this decision the Court declared in substance that a State can limit the exercise of the suffrage, although the restrictions imposed are expected to apply to the colored race only. The language of the Court was this: "Restrained by the Federal Constitution from discriminating against the negro as a race, the Mississippi Constitutional Convention discriminated against its characteristics and the offenses to which its weaker members are prone."

The other notable event is the election of November 8, 1898, in North Carolina and the spirit in which the result has been received throughout the country. The election is acknowledged to have been revolutionary in its character, but, while there is criticism of the methods by which the object was accomplished, there is no disposition manifested to interfere or to question the permanence of the result. This spirit is strikingly different from that shown in past years when similar revolutions occurred in other Southern States, and, taken in connection with the decision of the Supreme Court on the Mississippi Constitution, it must be accepted as a sign that colored suffrage has entered upon a new phase. It is pertinent, then, to review the subject from the beginning, and discover if any progress has been made towards a solution of the race problem.

The most difficult question which confronted Congress when it came to settle the status of the seceding States was the condition

of the colored people. To set them free and leave them without the means of protecting themselves in their civil and political rights appeared unjust to the negro and unsafe for the nation. This apprehension was strengthened by the disposition shown by the Southern whites towards the new freedmen. In nearly every one of the seceded States the Legislatures, meeting before the reconstruction acts went into effect, passed what are known as "black codes" and vagrancy laws. Mississippi gives one illustration. The vagrancy law enacted in that State provided that no colored man could leave the county where he last worked without the consent of his last employer; and in case he had not hired himself within the first twelve days of the new year his labor for the ensuing twelve months was to be sold to the highest bidder. This was apparently the re-establishment of slavery in all but the name.

But what form national protection of the ex-slaves should take was the occasion for long and serious debate. The first plan suggested was a constitutional amendment granting universal amnesty to all who had participated in the war against the Union in return for universal suffrage. This proposition was, however, rejected by the Joint Committee of the two Houses of Congress, known as the Reconstruction Committee. Then the fourteenth amendment to the Federal Constitution was passed by Congress and sent to the States for ratification. The purpose of this amendment was to induce the Southern States themselves to give the negro the ballot, by threatening them with a loss of representation in Congress and in the Electoral College in proportion to the population denied the suffrage. Tennessee, however, was the only one of the eleven Southern States, treated as having been in rebellion, which accepted the amendment. The refusal of the other ten States to ratify apparently convinced Congress that radical steps must be taken to protect the colored people. The reconstruction act was accordingly passed March 2, 1867, providing a method by which the seceding States could be restored to their position in the Union. This act established equal suffrage in the ten un-reconstructed States, and gave the negro an equal voice with the enfranchised whites in framing the new constitutions under which these States were to be readmitted to the Union. The fifteenth amendment, which was passed by Congress in February, 1868, and declared a part of the Constitution March 30,

1870, applied to the whole Union the same suffrage rule which the reconstruction act had applied to ten Southern States. The present period of negro suffrage, then, may be dated from March, 1867.

The first phase of colored suffrage lasted ten years, or until the spring of 1877. It is not a decade to which any man or party can look back with encouragement or satisfaction. Had the Southern whites themselves undertaken in patience and sympathy the political leadership of the colored people and not left them to become a prey to the adventurers who swarmed into the South from the North, the story of negro suffrage might have read differently. But as it is, it is a story of incompetency on the part of the black man, and of extravagance and corruption on the part of the white man, who used the ex-slaves for selfish purposes. There would in any event have been an era of demoralization in the South following the war for the Union. Business had come to a practical standstill, the old order of society was broken up and political alignments were disarranged. In such a period crime and corruption are sure to flourish. And as this period of change in the South was coincident with negro control, all the evil results occurring then have been charged to black supremacy. But, making full allowance for this, there is enough left to mark this period as one of the most humiliating in modern history. One proof of the extravagance and corruption prevailing is the increase in the debts of the states which were at any time ruled by the blacks. The following table shows this increase:

States.	Debt at close of war.	Debt at end of negro control.	Increase.
Alabama.....	\$7,945,000	\$52,761,917	\$44,816,917
Arkansas.....	2,084,719	19,398,000	17,313,281
Florida.....	370,617	15,797,587	15,426,970
Georgia.....	2,670,750	42,500,500	39,829,750
Louisiana.....	11,000,000	40,021,734	29,021,734
North Carolina.....	12,689,245	34,887,464	22,198,219
South Carolina.....	4,407,958	22,480,516	18,072,558
Texas.....	2,000,000	14,930,000	12,930,000
Virginia.....	33,248,141	47,090,866	13,842,725
Totals.....	\$76,416,430	\$289,868,584	\$213,452,154

Two-thirds of this increase of \$213,452,154 in the public debt of these nine states can be justly charged to the extravagance and corruption prevailing under negro-Republican rule, and a fair idea of the capacity of the negro to govern can be gained from it.

South Carolina offered the most humiliating illustration. Its public debt was increased fivefold and its Legislature was at one time composed almost wholly of blacks. This condition of things earned for it the title of the "prostrate State." In all the states subject at any time to colored-Republican control taxation increased also at such a rapid rate as to threaten the virtual confiscation of property within a few years.

But this condition of things could not continue. It was unnatural and intolerable. The pyramid of society was poised, on its apex and the law of gravity was sure to assert itself. The political balance between ignorance and corruption on one side and intelligence and property on the other had to be restored. But the way in which this was done created another condition as bad as the one it superseded. The remedy was no better than the disease. Instead of using moral force, brute force was chosen as the instrument for securing white supremacy. White violence and fraud were pitted against black ignorance and corruption, and the former won. The colored voter was intimidated by the night-riding Ku-Klux-Klan and frightened away from the polls by threats on his life. This was called "bulldozing," a word which came into the vocabulary along with negro suffrage and the use of which ceased when the need ended. Ballot boxes were stuffed with tissue ballots and forgery on tally sheets was freely committed. In this way State after State was reclaimed by the whites, until in 1875 only four Southern States remained under negro-Republican control. These were Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and South Carolina. In 1875 Mississippi was reclaimed from negro rule by what has since been known as the "Mississippi plan," and in 1876 the same "plan" was successfully used in the three remaining States. And when in 1877 President Hayes recognized these white state governments the whole fabric of negro-Republican rule in the South crumbled to the ground.

The second phase of negro suffrage began with the whites in control in every Southern State and determined to perpetuate that control. The means used to insure this were violence and crime against the blacks, and political, social and business ostracism against the few whites who persisted in adhering to the Republican party. The late Colonel H. C. Parsons, who was a native of Virginia and who served in the Army of the Confederacy, but was a Republican in politics, left an account of the disadvantages un-

der which a Southern Republican labored. The following is an extract from his statement describing conditions in the South as late as 1892 :

"Never was usurpation so entrenched as that of our Bourbon Democracy; never a party so perfect in organization, so methodical and merciless in the use of power. The most effective of all its agencies to-day are the boycott and the social ban. These twin monsters guard the avenues of escape. So little does this seem to be understood in the North, I am constrained to explain the situation in Virginia, where it is less severe than in States further South. There is here an organized and understood conspiracy that reaches every place where men seek credit, or a market, or employment. Every Southern-born white man who takes the *New York Tribune*, or the *Philadelphia Press*, or the *Cincinnati Commercial* is marked as an enemy of the South. He cannot buy on credit, or borrow at the banks, or obtain employment on as favorable terms as other men. In the proud city of Richmond, by a resolution of its Council, no man who votes the Republican ticket can work for the contractor on the streets. Eight years ago there was a short crop and much distress among farmers. "Fertilizer notes" for hundreds of thousands of dollars were maturing. A circular was sent by at least two great houses in Baltimore through our banks not to renew any notes of men who voted for Blaine. Four years later our State papers, by order of the Democratic committee, called upon every country merchant to stand at the polls from the opening to the close; and every man knew without telling that he could not buy another pound of coffee without cash if he voted for Harrison. There are white counties and mining districts, there are cities like Roanoke and Pocahontas, and communities near Washington like Falls Church, where this rule has been changed, but from the Blue Ridge to the sea, through sixty counties, in the great cities of Richmond, Petersburg, Danville and Lynchburg, a man cannot trade or practice a profession as successfully and vote a Republican ticket. There is not a white church in which, if it was stated that the preacher had voted against the Democratic party, pews would not be vacated."

The Southern Republicans, however, were not the only ones deprived of their political rights by the means adopted to maintain white supremacy in the South. The North was also denied its rightful influence in the direction of national affairs. Representation in Congress being based on the total population, it follows that if one-third or one-half the population is denied the right to vote a greatly increased political power is gained by the other one-half or two-thirds that retain their suffrage rights. They vote for themselves and the disfranchised also. The States in which such conditions exist exert a political power and influence in the nation out of proportion to their enfranchised population, and the other States are deprived of their just proportion of power and influence. This is the situation which has actually existed since 1877. The colored population in the South is counted in apportioning members of the House of Representatives, but its

vote is largely suppressed. This has added an additional and disproportionate value to every white vote cast in that section. How great this increased power is can be seen in the following table, which gives the white and colored population in the eleven Southern States in which the blacks are numerous, according to the census of 1890, and the number of Representatives in Congress apportioned to each class of population :

States.	White population.	Congressmen representing whites.	Black population.	Congressmen representing blacks.
South Carolina.....	462,008	3	689,141	4
Mississippi.....	544,851	3	744,749	4
Georgia.....	978,357	6	858,996	5
Alabama.....	853,718	5	679,299	4
Louisiana.....	558,395	3	560,192	3
Virginia.....	1,020,122	6	635,858	4
Florida.....	224,949	1	166,473	1
North Carolina.....	1,055,382	6	562,565	3
Tennessee.....	1,336,637	8	430,881	2
Texas.....	1,745,935	10	439,588	3
Arkansas.....	188,752	5	309,427	1
		<hr/> 56		<hr/> 34

Thirty-seven per cent. of the representation of these eleven States in Congress is based on the black population, but as colored suffrage is practically nullified in all of them the political power of the white vote is increased in national affairs by just so much per cent. In South Carolina, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia, taken together, a white vote counts for as much as two votes in the North in determining the complexion of Congress and in deciding who shall be President.

But the political wrong done to the Southern blacks and the Northern whites by the suppression of the colored vote was not the worst result of the methods employed to maintain white supremacy in the South. Open acquiescence in fraud on the ballot boxes and in deeds of violence against the negroes worked endless demoralization among the Southern whites themselves. The public conscience was debauched and the moral sense of the people blunted. It is only natural for men to argue that if crime is excused for a political purpose it will be excused for all purposes, and that if an oath known to be false is accepted by courts as evidence of the correctness of an election return, a false oath will be accepted in a civil suit. So great is the confusion wrought in this way that the leading newspaper of South Carolina was compelled a few years ago to instruct the rising generation to make a distinction between the nature of an election oath and an oath in any

other case. Other evidences of the harm done to society in the South by the methods used to maintain white supremacy are the propensity to mob law and the large number of defaulting State Treasurers, by whose dishonesty the Southern people lost millions of dollars. From all these causes the level of civilization was sensibly lowered, the industrial progress of the section checked, life and property made insecure and a carnival of crime begun.

This condition of things could not be the permanent solution of the colored suffrage question. The methods employed involved too great a strain on the public conscience. The social demoralization was too great. The political injustice to the North and the violation of law were too evident. To go back to negro control was unthinkable. One way out was to find some method of legalizing the suppression of the colored vote which would not conflict with the Federal Constitution. Mississippi took the first step towards reaching this end by framing a new constitution, the suffrage clause of which can be interpreted so as to discriminate against the ignorant colored voter and in favor of the ignorant white voter. It says that every elector "shall be able to read any section of this constitution, or he shall be able to understand the same when read to him, or give a reasonable interpretation thereof." It is this clause which the Supreme Court declared valid. It is easy to see how this clause can be manipulated, as it is manipulated, against the illiterate colored voter and in favor of the illiterate white voter.

The Mississippi constitution was framed in 1890. In 1895 a convention met in South Carolina and adopted a constitution the suffrage clause of which gives the right to vote to all who can read the constitution or explain it when read to them, provided they were registered before January 1, 1898. But all who were not so registered must be able to read and write or pay taxes on property valued at three hundred dollars, at least. In 1897 Louisiana followed by adopting a constitution which provides that electors must be able to read and write or be the owners of property valued at not less than three hundred dollars. But this is qualified by the provision that every person who was entitled to vote January 1, 1867, in any State of the Union, and his sons and grandsons who were twenty-one years of age or over in 1897, shall also be allowed to vote, provided they were registered previous to September 1, 1897.

The adoption of these constitutions and the probability that other States will follow marks the beginning of the third phase of negro suffrage. It is too early to determine what the result will be or how long this phase will last. As yet there is no apparent reason to suppose that these educational requirements have stimulated the illiterate whites and blacks to greater efforts to qualify themselves for the suffrage. Nor is the immediate effect on the whites themselves beneficial. A widespread and perilous indifference to their political duties has followed among the whites in each of the three States which have adopted constitutions eliminating the colored vote. This is evident from the following table, which compares the vote cast in 1876 with the poll of 1898 :

VOTE OF 1876.			
States.	Republican poll.	Democratic poll.	Totals.
Louisiana.....	75,315	70,508	145,823
Mississippi.....	52,705	112,143	164,848
South Carolina.....	92,081	91,540	183,621
Totals.....	220,101	274,191	494,292

VOTE OF 1898.			
States.	Republican poll.	Democratic poll.	Totals.
Louisiana.....	5,667	27,629	33,296
Mississippi.....	3,573	23,804	27,377
South Carolina.....	2,823	28,970	31,793
Totals.....	12,063	80,403	92,466

THE TWO YEARS COMPARED.			
	Republican.	Democratic.	Totals.
Vote of 1876.....	220,101	274,191	494,292
Vote of 1898.....	12,063	80,403	92,466
Difference.....	208,038	193,788	401,826

According to the census of 1890 there were 757,249 males of voting age in these three States, of whom 354,016 were whites and 403,233 were colored. The natural increase from births and emigration must have brought the total up to 900,000 and the white voters to about 400,000. The Republican vote may be considered as solidly black and the Democratic vote as solidly white. And as only 80,403 Democratic votes were polled in the three States only one white voter in five felt enough interest in the election to go to the polls. A similar result will doubtless follow in every Southern State which takes from the colored man the right to vote. Such political apathy cannot be viewed with unconcern. If it becomes

permanent it must lead inevitably to the formation of a small voting class and to the establishment of government by an oligarchy. Such conditions are not healthful in a country where the purity and efficiency of the government depend upon an alert and informed voting constituency. The present situation cannot, then, be considered as the final solution of the colored suffrage problem.

But what will that solution be ? To be permanent it must be based on right and justice to all races and to all sections. One answer to the question is that by waiting until the negro has become fitted for citizenship by education and discipline the problem will solve itself. It is probably true that in process of time, covering two or more generations, the elevation of the negro may solve the race problem, although there are high authorities claiming that the whites and blacks can never live on terms of political equality in the same country. But conceding for the moment that time will bring a solution, what in the meanwhile is to be the situation while the solving process is going on ? The South insists that it will not be ruled by ignorance. That is correct. But is it right for the South to take the ignorance which it discards in its home governments and use it as an aid in gaining political powers in the nation ? Is this reasonable ? Is this just and fair ? And yet this is exactly what the South is doing when the colored population is counted in apportioning Representatives in Congress and votes in the electoral college, and the colored vote is suppressed. The South asks the nation to permit in the country at large what it will not permit in its local affairs. This the nation cannot consent in justice to all sections to allow. The South demands that intelligence shall control in its local affairs. Is it unjust for the nation to ask the South to submit to the same rule in national affairs ?

There is one straight road out of the embarrassments into which colored suffrage has brought the country. This is through a constitutional amendment making ability to read and write a requirement for the exercise of the suffrage, and also making literacy the basis for the apportionment of members of the House of Representatives and, consequently, of votes in the electoral college. This method will bring the only lasting solution of this problem. Other methods are but patches and poultices applied to a sore on the body politic. The results of such a solution are worked out in a table following. The Federal census of 1890 does

not give the number of people in the country able to read and write at the age of twenty-one years and over. But it gives the illiterates twenty years and over, and from these figures the literates in each State can be obtained. Taking the literates twenty years of age and over as a basis and giving one Representative in Congress to each 80,000 of literates, and allowing an additional Representative to States with the largest fractions, representation in Congress and in the electoral college can be easily ascertained. Such a scheme is presented in the following table:

States.	Total Population.	Literates 20 years of age and over.	Representatives in Con- gress.	Loss or Gain, in Elec- toral Col.
Alabama.....	1,513,017	381,256	5	7
Arkansas.....	1,128,179	350,653	4	6
California.....	1,208,130	697,667	9	11
Colorado.....	419,198	159,506	2	4
Connecticut.....	746,258	442,134	6	8
Delaware.....	168,493	80,472	1	3
Florida.....	391,422	127,348	2	4
Georgia.....	1,337,353	474,681	6	8
Idaho.....	84,385	44,796	1	3
Illinois.....	3,826,351	1,974,306	25	27
Indiana.....	2,192,404	1,101,678	14	16
Iowa.....	1,911,896	969,998	12	14
Kansas.....	1,427,096	691,214	9	11
Kentucky.....	1,858,635	691,347	9	11
Louisiana.....	1,118,587	275,311	3	5
Maine.....	661,086	389,693	5	7
Maryland.....	1,042,390	468,804	6	8
Massachusetts...	2,238,943	1,326,543	17	19
Michigan.....	2,093,889	1,107,096	14	16
Minnesota.....	1,301,826	643,431	8	10
Mississippi.....	1,289,600	299,810	4	6
Missouri.....	2,679,184	1,234,687	15	17
Montana.....	132,159	85,918	1	3
Nebraska.....	1,058,910	527,579	7	9
Nevada.....	45,761	26,233	1	3
New Hampshire....	876,530	227,453	3	5
New Jersey.....	1,444,933	788,152	10	12
New York.....	5,997,853	3,441,117	43	45
North Carolina....	1,617,947	450,922	6	8
North Dakota.....	182,719	90,508	1	3
Ohio.....	3,672,316	1,936,957	24	26
Oregon.....	313,767	173,073	2	4
Pennsylvania.....	5,258,014	2,722,472	34	36
Rhode Island.....	345,506	191,424	2	4
South Carolina....	1,151,149	259,529	3	5
South Dakota.....	328,808	162,905	2	4
Tennessee.....	1,767,518	575,051	7	9
Texas.....	2,235,523	788,561	10	12
Utah.....	207,905	94,598	1	3
Vermont.....	332,422	191,528	2	4
Virginia.....	1,655,980	526,525	7	9
Washington.....	349,390	209,983	3	5
West Virginia.....	762,704	305,559	4	6
Wisconsin.....	1,686,880	821,841	10	12
Wyoming.....	60,705	37,365	1	3
			361	451

The census of 1900 would make a few minor changes in the

scheme, but its general features would remain the same. It would base representation and the government of the nation on the education and intelligence of the country, where it should permanently rest. It would be fair and just to all sections and so would give a final solution to the vexatious colored suffrage question. The South, surely, could not offer any opposition to it, for it would only apply to the whole country the rule which the Southern whites claim must prevail in that section. The weightiest arguments that can be brought against it are the facts that it will require a constitutional amendment, and that the conservative character of the American people makes the work of changing the constitution slow, tedious and doubtful. But if there is no other method so quick, sure and permanent it is worth while to make the effort. If the South, however, will not consent to a scheme so fair, then the Fourteenth Amendment to the Federal Constitution should be rigidly enforced. And the second clause of that amendment says "When the right to vote at any election for the choice of electors for President and Vice-President of the United States, Representatives in Congress, the executive and judicial officers of a State or the members of the Legislature thereof, is denied to any of the male members of such State being twenty-one years of age, and citizens of the United States, or in any way abridged, except for participation in rebellion or other crime, the basis of representation therein shall be reduced in the proportion in which the number of such male citizens shall bear to the whole number of male citizens twenty-one years of age in such State."

This question of colored suffrage involving, as it does, the capacity of the dark races to improve and rise to the level of the white races, has a broader significance than its effect upon this country alone. If the late Charles H. Pearson was correct in his "Forecast" the time is near when the dark races are to enter more actively into the world's affairs, and on their capacity to improve and to keep equal step with the white races depends in a great degree the safety of what has been gained for civilization already and what further advances are to be made in the arts and sciences. All of Mr. Pearson's premises may not be well based, and so all his conclusions may not be warranted. But it is evident to the most superficial observer that the progress of events is bringing the white race into closer and more constant relations with the dark races, and the more profound thinkers are seriously question-

ing what the result to civilization is to be. Will this more intimate contact be followed by the elevation of the dark skinned man or by the deterioration of the white skinned man? It was Mr. Pearson's forecast that the latter was the more probable result.

But a lowering of the aggressive qualities, mental, moral and physical, which have enabled the white man to subdue to his purpose every country and clime he has invaded, cannot be contemplated with serenity. These qualities are absolutely necessary to progress and the preservation of civilization. They must be saved at all hazards. But the question whether they can be saved if the white races attempt to lift to their own level the dark races has still to be answered. The test now being made in this country as to the capacity of the black man to develop and reach the highest civilization must throw needed light on this problem. And in any event the training and disciplining that 8,000,000 or 9,000,000 colored people are receiving in this country cannot fail to exert a profound influence upon the future of the dark races all over the world. And it must add to the value of the result reached that this training and discipline is being acquired under the best available conditions and in a way to develop most quickly and fully the capabilities of an important branch of the dark races. If this attempt succeeds many apprehensions will be quieted and the future of civilization and progress will be more secure.

However skeptical De Tocqueville may have been of the capacity of the white and dark races to live together in the same country on an equal footing, he was generous in his praises of the nation that has done more than any other people to ameliorate the condition of the dark skinned man. The greatest and most praiseworthy achievement of the English, in De Tocqueville's opinion, is the conquest and peaceful government of India. It may have been to work out one other phase of this problem of the dark races that the negro was brought to this continent and placed in contact with the most virile branch of the Anglo-Saxon family. Viewed in this light, the experiment in colored suffrage and its results assume an aspect more than local or even national. It becomes world-wide in its significance. It may strengthen the patience of the American people and encourage them to persevere in the task set before them to know that they are helping to work out one of the greatest problems of the human race.

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